

Series: Ephesians: *The Christian Mystery and Mission*

Week 1

CDOBC – beginning on 2/6/11

Title: “The Divine Draft Day”

1:1-6 ~ February 6, 2011

OBJECTIVE: To help us understand and appreciate God’s grace and His sovereign choosing of us unto salvation.

Announcements

- Welcome / guests – communication cards
- Rodeo-Fest! Feb. 20th
- Men’s Golf Outing – March 19th @ The Views Golf Club

Opening Prayer

Ephesus was one of the great cities of the first century. It was located on a strategy ‘highway’ between the eastern and western regions of the Roman Empire. It had a port for the shipping trade, and it was a cosmopolitan city. The ruins that still stand today give only a hint of the greatness that the city once held. One of the Seven Wonders of the World was Ephesus – the Temple of Artemis. The temple had 127 pillars, every one of them a gift from a foreign king. The pillars were made of marble, and most of them were either inlaid with jewels or overlaid with gold.

The Apostle Paul first visited Ephesus on his second missionary journey. He was actually traveling with Priscilla and Aquila on his way back to Jerusalem (Acts 18:18-21). Priscilla and Aquila ended up staying in Ephesus, and they began a small church there. On his third missionary journey, Paul spent about three years with them (Acts 20:31) in Ephesus, and his ministry flourished there. There were about 230 independent communities within the Roman province of Asia, and a strong, healthy church in Ephesus could be a vital hub to reach those communities with the Gospel, which we read about in Acts 19.

Acts 19:9b-10

“He took the disciples with him and had discussions daily in the lecture hall of Tyrannus. 10 This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord.”

Eventually, the influence of the Gospel began to have a negative effect on the financial side of the biggest business in town – which was selling little idols / statues of the goddess Artemis. The great temple was a big money-maker, and we read in Acts 19 of the silversmith’s riot against Paul and some of the other Christian leaders. It was at this time that Paul was forced to leave Ephesus, and move toward Rome.

Eventually, Paul was arrested for his preaching, and imprisoned. He appealed to Caesar, and while he was in prison awaiting his appearance before Caesar, he wrote this letter – Ephesians. This is why it’s called a prison epistle.

Most scholars believe Paul wrote this letter around 60-65 A.D.

This morning we are beginning a study that will take us through the book of Ephesians. Ephesians is a unique book in that it wasn’t written to correct any heresy, or to call a church back to obedience. Ephesians stands alone in that it’s a book that celebrates the truth of our standing in Christ, it explains the mystery of the body of Christ, and it naturally leads to our Christian mission.

This study promises to give you a greater understanding of God’s love for you – and how blessed you are to be a Christian.

Open your bibles to Ephesians 1

Ephesians 1:12

Paul’s *authority* and *office*. vs. 1-2

Paul begins by identifying himself as an Apostle of Christ. This speaks to the office of ‘Apostle’ – of which there were only 13 (not counting Judas, plus Matthias [Acts 1:26] and Paul). Paul’s reference to his Apostleship carried with it the authority of the office. An Apostle

was God’s mouthpiece...similar to an O.T. prophet. What Paul writes in this letter is not his own human opinion, it is the Words and truth of God, and as we read it, we need to realize the authority behind these words.

Paul points out that he was not an Apostle by his own will – or by his own qualifications – he was as Apostle by the “...by the will of God”.

We see in Acts 13 when Paul was called to be an Apostle:

Acts 13:2-3

“2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” 3 So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.”

Next in verse 1, we see who this letter was written to:

“To the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus”

Many manuscripts of this letter do not have this sentence (vs. 1b). Most believe this was a letter Paul intended to be sent first to the church in Ephesus, but then it was circulated to all the churches throughout Asia Minor.

“Grace and peace” was a common greeting – but notice the source of our grace and peace – “...from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” This is a hint of what the following verses will expand upon. The grace we have in God – through Christ – give us peace. This peace is not of human origin – it’s of divine origin.

Praise God for your spiritual wealth. vs. 3

EPH 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

Eulogia = “Blessing”, “Praise” – where we derive our English term ‘eulogy’ from. This term means to ‘speak well of someone’ ‘to praise them’ ‘to commend’ ‘to bless’.

Paul uses this term 3x in verse 3. This verse actually begins a long section of praise that he continues through vs. 14 – and it’s all one sentence in the Greek (over 200 words in the Greek). Once he started this, he couldn’t stop!

This entire anthem of praise that begins the letter focuses on what God has done through Christ. Look at the grammatical tense of this little phrase “has blessed us”. Past tense in our English, in the Greek it’s an aorist – which has as its main idea a completed action. This is not speaking about something that will happen in the future – or something that will happen with a few special believers. Paul is referring here to the blessings that every believer in Christ already has!

“heavenly realms” – speaks to the source of our blessings. Christians don’t always enjoy the same ‘blessings’ as nonbelievers. Satan is the ruler and prince of this world. For the Ephesian believers, they were living during the reign of Nero who was a horrific persecutor of Christians. As Christians, we are not to look to this earth and this life for our primary blessings – but to God and our citizenship in Heaven as the place for our blessings. We’re told to “store up treasures in heaven...” (Matt. 6:20). So it’s not surprising that Paul points us to the permanent home of our blessings.

Just because Paul is focusing our thoughts on the heavenly nature of our blessings, it doesn’t mean that these blessings don’t benefit our life on earth.

“...every spiritual blessing...”

We have everything we need in Christ! There are not spiritual blessings that the believer in Christ lacks.

We have all things because we are “in Christ”.

Do you need peace? You already have it. (John 14:27)

Do you need strength? You already have it (Phil. 4:13)

Do you need love? You already have it (Rom. 5:5)

Do you need joy? You already have it (John 15:11)

2 Peter 1:3 “His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.”

Col. 2:10 “and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.”

1 Cor. 6:17 “But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit.”

All that Christ has...is already ours! We are one with Christ!

Our **Divine draft** day vs. 4-5

NFL draft – great day for those young men whose dreams are fulfilled the moment they hear their name called by the commissioner of the NFL.

Long ago – before the world ever existed – God drafted you – God chose **you** to receive His grace and to become one of His children.

Read vs. 4-5

Paul is amazed at how God formed the Body of Christ – the Church. This section can be broken down into 3 sub-sections. Today, we’re looking at vs. 4-6a where Paul looks at how God formed the Body in the past (by election), next week we’ll look at the second section which focuses on the present aspect of the Body (vs. 6b-11 – redemption), and the following week we’ll look at the third section – the future aspect of the Body / Church (vs. 12-14 – inheritance).

Today, we’re going to look at this topic of our election into the Body of Christ – the truth that if you are a believer in Christ, God chose you unto belief.

These two verses before us today are the foundation of an entire doctrine known as the Doctrine of Election. This doctrine has been debated over the centuries, and it has caused much division among Christians. The reason is that this passage and the subsequent doctrine it teaches makes us feel like pawns. We like to think the decisions we make are independent of any outside influence – this is called free will.

This passage certainly creates tension between our idea of free will and what God does by choosing / electing those who will believe. First, let's correct a common understanding of free will. Most would define free will as being able to choose anything we wish. But Scripture teaches us that no human being is free to choose anything. From the moment of our conception, we are ruled by sin. We are a slave to sin from the day of our birth. Before you come to faith in Christ, no choice you ever make is outside the influence and control of sin. Our 'freedom' is limited by many things.

Allow me throw some more confusion into the mix...the Bible clearly teaches that God has chosen us unto salvation – but it also teaches and affirms that we have choice – free will to choose God! The Christian paradox...God *elects* us, we *choose* Him!

How does this work? I don't know. I can't tell you how to harmonize the believer's election unto salvation before the foundation of the world – and the Bible's clear teaching that each person is responsible before God for either their acceptance of Christ – or their rejection of Christ.

Scripture teaches God's election / choosing of those unto salvation...

2 Timothy 1:9 “...who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time...”

2 Timothy 2:10 “Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.”

2 Thess. 2:13 “But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.”

Acts 13:48 “When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed.”

The Book of life was written from the foundation of the world...

Rev. 17:8 “The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast...”

“He chose us” – Aorist middle – middle voice is reflexive, which means God is picking / choosing for Himself.

Meaning, that when God chose us unto salvation – before the foundation of the world, He did so for His own glory – for His own good pleasure – even more than He did so for our own good / benefit!

Scripture also teaches that God elected Israel:

Deut. 7:7-8a “The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you...”

Isaiah 45:4 “For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me.”

65:9 “I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah those who will possess my mountains; my chosen people will inherit them, and there will my servants live.”

65:22 “For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands.”

Bottom line...Scripture clearly teaches that God has chosen...elected some unto salvation. Scripture also clearly teaches that we are to place our faith in Christ and His

sacrifice on the cross for our sins. We are called to believe – to come to faith – to answer God’s call of salvation. This is a mystery – these two truths stand in tension with one another – but they are both equally true.

We don’t like the tension this brings us. We want to systematize our theology – and God’s election and our “free will” don’t fit neatly into any system. We prefer to explain away mystery – but this mystery can’t be explained away. We need to confess that we can’t explain this one – and let God be God. He has chosen some unto salvation – and He has made us responsible for our choices.

The doctrine of election is an encouraging truth – not discouraging. God loves you so much He chose you! That’s how important and loved you are by Him! He elected you – He chose you to have the holiness of Christ (imputed holiness, righteousness) – and to be in His family.

Vs. 5 – He planned to adopt you from eternity past. Our Heavenly adoption.

5 He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will—

Rom. 8:17 “Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.”

We are adopted “through Jesus Christ” – we are not adopted because of anything we do – He chose us before the creation of the world...before we could ever do one thing! We are adopted

because of what Jesus did on the cross. We are adopted only **through** Christ.

Why?

Because He wanted to – He loved you! (“...in accordance with His pleasure and will”)

To be praised for His “glorious grace”

According to Roman law (context of this letter), adopted sons had the same rights as natural born sons.

The motive of our election vs. 6

6 to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves.

Also look to vs. 5b – “...in accordance with His pleasure and will...”

Application

Praise God for your salvation – vs.3

Place your faith in Christ!

Election leads to humility, not pride.

He chose you...because He wanted to! Because He loves you! Not because you or I deserved to be chosen.

He chose us...despite our sins!

Close in prayer

